

## **Bayou Bourbeux Watershed Plan Complete**

The multi-purpose Bayou Bourbeux Watershed plan, a plan designed to reduce flooding and promote conservation work on many areas of land in southwest St. Landry Parish, is complete.

“We developed the watershed plan at the request of the local sponsors and people,” explained Keith Latiolais, District Conservationist with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). “The 81,500-acre plan is designed to reduce flooding of homes in some areas of Opelousas and promote other conservation work and measures in the parish. The Bayou Bourbeux project will focus on four major measures at a total cost of over \$7 million.”

Approximately 7,600 feet of concrete-lined channel and other flood-proofing measures will be installed along Bayous Yarbor and Callahan within the City of Opelousas. A conservation land treatment program has already been initiated to provide resource improvement to 3,200 acres of critically eroding cropland. Over 700 acres have been enrolled into the Wetlands Reserve Program, a program designed to restore and protect wetlands on private land. Also, 11 miles of channel will be restored on the lower portions of Bayous Bellevue and Bourbeux.

“Funds to do the channel restoration phase of the project will be provided by the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development,” said Latiolais.

St. Landry Soil and Water Conservation District and NRCS personnel have already begun developing long-term contracts with landowners in the project area to treat many critically eroding cropland areas in the watershed.

Michael Levier, Grant Administrator with the City of Opelousas, who has been instrumental in assisting with the flood protection phase of the plan feels that the Bayou Bourbeux Watershed Project will be very helpful to Opelousas and other areas of the Parish.

“Through the implementation of the Bayou Bourbeux Watershed, the quality of life for many of the residents of Opelousas and southwest St. Landry Parish can be restored,” said Levier. “Thanks to the hard work of many people, the Bayou Bourbeux Watershed Project is slowly becoming a reality. When all the work is complete, people will see a very positive difference.”

The federal sponsor for the Bayou Bourbeux Watershed Project is the U.S. Department of Agriculture—Natural Resources Conservation Service. Local sponsors include the City of Opelousas, Drainage District No. 1 of Ward 2, Bellevue and Coulee Crouche Gravity Drainage District No. 20, Coulee Crouche Gravity Drainage District No. 22, Ward 1 South Gravity Drainage District, Prairie Bosse Gravity Drainage District No. 15, St. Landry Consolidated Gravity Drainage District No. 1 of Third Ward, and the St. Landry Soil and Water Conservation District.

(More)

“Southern Development Foundation (SDF), a non-profit foundation which, as one of its objectives, assists limited-resource and minority agricultural producers and landowners in southwest Louisiana, was very helpful in providing assistance to the Natural Resources Conservation Service on this project,” said Latiolais. “SDF personnel were familiar with the flooding problems in the Ina Clare Community and helped in making direct contacts with residents. They also provided helpful information related to past flooding problems in that area of Opelousas.”

For more information on the Bayou Bourbeux Watershed Project contact Keith Latiolais at 942-2530. All services and programs are offered on a non-discriminatory basis.

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